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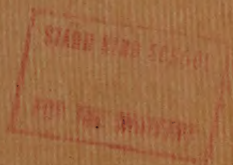
# FAITH

AND

# FREEDOM (Oxford)



## A Journal of Progressive Religion



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# FAITH AND FREEDOM

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## CONTENTS

|  |     |     |     |     |     |     |    |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|
| EDITORIAL  | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1  |
| THE OLD AND THE NEW RATIONALISM                                |     |     |     |     |     |     |    |
| RAYMOND V. HOLT, M.A., B.LITT.                                 | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 3  |
| AN INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY                                   |     |     |     |     |     |     |    |
| FRED KENWORTHY, M.A., B.D.                                     | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 11 |
| MODERN INTERPRETATIVE CRITICISM                                |     |     |     |     |     |     |    |
| FRANK A. BULLOCK   | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 19 |
| THE UNPARDONABLE SIN— <i>A Theological Fiction</i>             |     |     |     |     |     |     |    |
| R. TRAVERS HERFORD, D.D.                                       | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 27 |
| A CASE FOR PETITIONARY PRAYER                                  |     |     |     |     |     |     |    |
| WALLACE TAVENER  | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 31 |
| TALES FOR TELLING—   |     |     |     |     |     |     |    |
| <i>A Guide to Stories in or 'near' the Bibles of the World</i> |     |     |     |     |     |     |    |
| WILL HAYES (Brother John)                                      | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 37 |
| SPIRITUAL DRUGS—   |     |     |     |     |     |     |    |
| <i>A Review of 'Miracles' by C. S. Lewis</i>                   |     |     |     |     |     |     |    |
| S. H. MELLONE, M.A., D.SC.                                     | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 43 |
| THE DISSENTING TRADITION—                                      |     |     |     |     |     |     |    |
| <i>A Review of Recent Historical Works</i>                     |     |     |     |     |     |     |    |
| H. LISMER SHORT, M.A.  | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 45 |
| DR. ALBERT SCHWEITZER— <i>A Declaration of Faith</i>           | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 48 |



LAUNCHED AT THE INSTANCE OF THE OLD STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION OF MANCHESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD, WITH THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE DR. DANIEL JONES TRUST

## EDITORIAL

A THEOLOGICAL Journal is in special need of enunciating its principles and purposes when, as in this case, it represents no institution, and supports no dogmatic position.

Our purpose, in the words of Milton, is "to be still searching for what we know not by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it—this is the golden rule in theology as in arithmetic, and makes up the best harmony in a church; not the forced and outward union of cold and neutral, and inwardly divided minds!"

Such is the ethos of that movement which claims the adherence of those who have called *Faith and Freedom* into being.

Whatever, in the light of knowledge, reason and conscience, can be brought to bear on the problems of human nature and human destiny, within the limits imposed by the space at our disposal, will be presented in its pages. Therefore, it should appeal to all who have faith in man and the divinity that is in man, whether they be self-acknowledged heirs of the Unitarian tradition or not.

The freedom which we claim as a birthright of the human spirit is also with us, a supreme act of faith in a Living God. Hence, our title is no mere alliterative jingle. It is a trumpet-call whose undertones carry the meaning of Freedom in Faith, and whose overtones signify our Faith in Freedom.

If it be permitted to an editor to proclaim a policy, it may be forgiven him if, in his enthusiasm, he also takes upon himself for one brief moment the role of prophet.

There was a time when theology could lay claim to the proud title, "Queen of the Sciences." But, alas! in this scientific era no one knows better than the theologian that such a claim would sound ludicrous. Why has theology become *Cinderella* to Science and Art? We suggest that it is because theology became bound to a closed revelation and to a dogmatic church. This orthodox tradition never really accepted the primacy given to Reason by Aquinas, who won pre-eminence for theology as a science. Wicksteed has shown that the distinctive doctrine of Aquinas was that though Revelation transcends Reason it cannot contradict it. "Our sense for truth, beauty and goodness may be warped, deformed, or blighted by arrogance; it may be fostered, strengthened and uplifted by reverent humility; but if we allow it to *abdicate* we are self-betrayed."

Moreover, dogmatism is necessarily obscurantist and vitiates even the truth it seeks to protect.

So, in this Journal, we intend to espouse the forlorn cause of theology. We intend to show that if thought is loyal to the truth of knowledge, reason, conscience and imagination, then there is no place for apologetics in the defence of a closed revelation, dogma, creed, or authoritative church, for these things have passed away.

The task is admittedly tremendous and likely to daunt anyone who has not awakened with awe to the realisation that the human mind has been created to know the Truth. With Milton we can say, "So Truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength."



What is more, we believe that a Copernican turn in the evolution of man's thought and mind, at least equal in significance to that achieved by Immanuel Kant, is upon us.

Here are but a few salient points with which the Christian theologian must grapple :—

(i) The scientific method is applicable to the realm of spiritual experience no less than to the physical world. What else is "By their fruits ye shall know them" but the root of all scientific inference?

(ii) The world of the imagination is bound by different but no less inexorable laws than those operating in the material universe. "By God I mean Law" (*Spinoza*).

(iii) Acceptance of the Universal Rule of Law is a necessary condition of Freedom, for freedom is always both conditional and relative. "Ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you Free."

(iv) The principle of relativity operates in all human judgments, inspirations and revelations, whereas traditional dogmatic theology has been absolutist in its claims and pre-relativistic in its outlook.

(v) When dealing with what *is*, all theology is natural theology; when concerned with what *ought to be*, all theology is supernatural. "The supernatural is the possibility of all that *ought to be* and not the fixed ground of what already is" (*Oman*). This is also a clue to immanence and transcendence.

(vi) The doctrine of evolution, especially in its emphasis upon successive levels and newly-emerging wholes, shows that moral and spiritual evolution is bound up with the physical and biological. The Eschatological hope was a false hope; the Kingdom can never come as a direct result of world-cataclysm, but of slow, painstaking effort, ever more fully conscious.

(vii) All fear-motivated sanctions in religion and social morals are really immoral. True growth never comes by coercion but by persuasion; thus do but compare the Beatitudes and the Ten Commandments.

(viii) The great religious truths concerning God and human destiny are bodied forth in myths which change naturally and inevitably with the evolution of human nature. The lower and more primitive forms must be relinquished when the higher truth becomes apparent. "Time makes ancient good uncouth."

(ix) The dualisms inherent in traditional theology—the dualisms of body and soul, matter and mind, earth and heaven, man and God—are false if they are held to be final or absolute or to involve a *totally-other* relationship. Man is, himself, the bridge between the opposites which are apparent rather than real. These pairs of ideas are intellectual abstracts from the reality of the cosmos, which, by its inner necessity, is both matter and mind, structure and function—a living reality—and cannot be known by the human mind unless it is both.

A theology which can encompass holistic evolution and, without special pleading, interpret it as the progressive process of Incarnation in which life seeks a divinity which forever transcends it, will have no fear that the Revelation of God is closed or that the human mind is near the end of its tether.

To give free utterance to this faith in God and Man, to interpret it and apply it with what scholarly acumen we can muster, is the core of our intention in *Faith and Freedom*.

# *The Old and the New Rationalism*

RAYMOND V. HOLT, M.A., B.LITT.

*(The sentences in italics, if read consecutively, form a synopsis of the article.)*

*The Present Age is in Revolt from Reason.*

**W**E live in a time of increasing dogmatism, authoritarianism, and irrationalism, ideological cruelty and persecution. There is more deliberately invented and organised untruth in the world to-day than ever in human history. That is one of the paradoxes of the present time. Immense additions to knowledge and understanding have been made through devotion to truth by a number of great men working together in a civilized society. This knowledge has given men immense new power; this power is used to poison man's mind, to crush his freedom, and so to destroy human civilization.

Freedom and Truth are and have always been the special concern of Unitarians. Devotion to freedom and truth is part of the Unitarian special contribution to religion and the world. Our faith is a Free Religious Faith. And by freedom we do not mean freedom of everyone to believe what he wants but freedom to follow wherever the search for truth may lead. On no other basis can men live as men. If the present flight from reason continues, if the wave of irrationalism continues to submerge the gains of centuries, if the return to authoritarianism becomes world wide, whether it be the authoritarianism of a State or a Church, new dark ages will come upon mankind and the new dark ages will be worse than the old because the modern barbarians have more power. If the machine gun and aeroplane had been invented in the seventh century, Europe would probably have never found its way out of the dark ages. The lights are going out and once they are extinguished it will not be easy to restore them. But to cure an evil it is not enough to condemn it. Historians and psychologists agree in this, and the new rationalist must learn from both.

*This revolt against reason is due in great measure to the inadequacies of the old rationalism which has left men's lives empty.*

The old rationalism freed men from many superstitions and cleared the ground for future advance, but it was critical rather than creative. In the end the old rationalism blinded men to the deepest things of life and left them uncertain of anything.

Everything was only a matter of opinion and there were always two opinions. That men should judge of themselves what is right was a maxim of Jesus as well as of Unitarians. But men were left without any

standards of judgment, without insight into principles. Men lost any sense of meaning or purpose in their lives, and since men cannot go on living if they come to believe that there is no meaning in their lives, they were ready to abandon reason if that was all that reason had to give them. The present wave of irrationalism is in essence due to the failure of the old rationalism to satisfy the needs of life. It is not due to the failure of reason or mind itself. And the only way to meet and overcome it is to turn it into fruitful channels. The floods which come down the River Nile may destroy or make fruitful the land.

*But irrationalism will not make good the defects of the old rationalism.*

Irrationalism can only end in blindness and death. Mankind ought to have learned that to-day. Hitler exhorted men to think with their blood, not with their minds. The first act of every dictator is to suppress freedom of thought. Professor R. G. Collingwood wrote in 1939—"Fascism means the end of clear thinking and the triumph of irrationalism." The statement can also be reversed. Irrationalism leads to dogmatism, authoritarianism of a bad kind and, if resisted, to fascism. A. Schweitzer warned men twenty years ago that the abdication of thought would be the decisive factor in the collapse of our civilization.

*The cure for bad thinking is better thinking, not to stop thinking.*

Even Unitarian ministers (who ought to know better) often say—What we want is more feeling and less thinking. As though feeling itself were of any value. Of course men only act when their feelings are stirred. But the value of the action depends on the quality of the feeling and thinking which lies behind it. Intensity of feeling is no guide at all to the value or truth of the feeling. In fact, the narrower a man's mind and the less his knowledge, the more intense his feeling often seems to be. The men responsible for Belsen and other horrors felt intensely. They had no doubts and no problems. Their feeling gave them power but it was the power to do evil. Ultimately, of course, the whole opposition of feeling and thinking is a false one, for man thinks with his whole being, as Professor Graham Wallas used to insist. And so far from being unaware of the importance of feeling, he was one of the first thinkers to apply the study of psychology to politics in his "*Human Nature and Politics*." The new rationalism will take into full account all the springs of human conduct. But it will not forget that while man's thinking may be very inadequate, man is still a thinking reed, as Pascal called him. "Everything that we call specifically human is due to man's power of thinking" (Professor R. G. Collingwood). The more we realize this, the greater is the obligation upon us to discover why then men and women are in full flight from reason and to try to understand where the old rationalism has proved disastrously inadequate. A new rationalism must make good the defects of the old rationalism.



*The contrast between the old and the new rationalism may be best illustrated by the contrast between old town planning and new town planning.*

The old town plan is a series of quite straight parallel streets varied by a few crescents of an equally regular pattern. The plan might have been drawn in an office by some one who had never seen the ground on which the town has to be built. It was a universal plan which would fit everywhere or not fit anywhere, which is the same thing. In one town so planned the streets do not bear names but letters and numbers. Streets running east to west are given letters; streets north and south are given numbers. This plan was not without many good points certainly. The streets were broad, they were planted with trees, there were green squares and so on. There was some use of mind in it—even though slight. By contrast with the congested narrow streets and higgledy-piggledy houses of the quite unplanned town this marked a real improvement. The whole was in a way dignified, though perhaps some of its dignity was the dignity of lifelessness.

Compare with this a newer town plan—the plan of the new Capital of the Australian Commonwealth (Canberra). The plan also was the work of mind—all planning is—but of mind used to the full. And this plan of the new capital suffers from none of the defects of the old. This town could not have been built anywhere—it could only have been built on the particular site. The natural features of the site have been used, not ignored or flattened out. The streets follow the natural lines of the ground, they are not forced into an unnatural and monotonous straightness. The water resources of the site are skilfully made use of to provide additional charm. This plan does not depress us as the old one did. To look at it is a double pleasure; it fills us with the thought: How varied and how beautiful is this life of ours, and how wonderful is man's power through mind of drawing out this variety and this beauty.

Even in this country we are beginning to see that the best way to lay out a housing estate is not to begin by cutting down all the trees. We are beginning to adapt the plan to the site, not the site to the plan.

*The old rationalism was abstract, formal, analytic, departmental, static and negative. The new rationalism will be the opposite of all these, concrete, living, synthetic, holistic, dynamic and positive.*

The old rationalism was abstract. It took a few facts which it assumed to be absolute and drew certain conclusions from them by a process of logical deduction and then tried to impose these conclusions on the rest of life. And so the variety and wonder of life was lost and life became very tame and very uninteresting. It is the reaction from this tameness that has caused many young people to fly from reason.

The new rationalism will be concrete. Its method will not be the method of argument from certain facts or premises assumed to be fixed,

but the attempt to grasp the relationship of as wide a body of experience as possible.

The old rationalism was formal. The new rationalism deals with life. "Experience must precede the attempt to explain it" (W. H. Reade). History and Psychology will both play a larger part in the new rationalism.

The old rationalism was analytic. And even to-day men often think that it is possible to understand the nature of something by mere analysis. They forget that analysis by its very nature can only give knowledge about certain aspects of life. You can analyse a violin into some bits of wood and a bit of catgut, but the nature of the violin is not revealed in that analysis, though the analysis is not only correct as far as it goes, but useful and necessary if you want to make a violin. You can analyse a piece of music played on the violin into a series of wave lengths and write down a sonata as a series of numbers. This is very valuable if you want to invent a wireless or understand something of the nature of sound and the fact has far-reaching implications fatal to materialism. But even that does nothing to explain the thrill of listening to Beethoven and still less does it explain Beethoven. Beethoven himself and every human being can be analyzed. You only begin to understand anything when you see it as a whole. Analysis throws light on the parts but not on their relations. The new rationalism, therefore, will follow up analysis with synthesis. This means that the new rationalism will try to see thing as wholes, it will be holistic. It will deal with patterns. There are indeed no completely isolated facts. And, if there were, they would be without meaning. Facts are seen in their significance only when they are seen in relation to one another. From this it follows also that the meaning of facts can only be understood when they are seen as parts of a process. The new rationalism therefore is dynamic where the old was static. You cannot discover the meaning of life by dissecting a corpse.

And for that reason the new rationalism will be profoundly interested in history. For it is impossible to understand the meaning of anything if all you know about it is what it is at this particular moment. You must know how it came into being. That is old rationalism was static; the new rationalism will be dynamic. But the past can only be understood in the light also of the future. For you do not understand the nature of anything unless you understand what it may become. You must look into the future as well as the past. For the present is indeed only the point at which past and future meet, and driven still further by the recognition of the fact that you do not understand anything till you see it in its wholeness, you are forced also to consider the meaning of our changing lives in the light of that which transcends them.

The new rationalism therefore will be positive not negative as was



the old, life affirming not life denying. The negativeness of the Rationalist Press Association is essentially nineteenth century in its outlook. Perhaps this explains why it publishes so many out of date works of anthropology in its "Thinkers' Library." It is curious that people who would never dream of reading nineteenth century books on chemistry and physics treat nineteenth century books on religion and anthropology as authoritative. It is true that as individuals many old type rationalists are working for a finer world but their ideals are inconsistent with their fundamental way of regarding the world. All this may be summed up in the statement that *the new rationalism will be rooted in experience*—the whole of experience or so much of it as it is possible for men at present to grasp. The attempt to understand life as a whole will drive men deeper and deeper till they find a religion of some kind. The new rationalism will be religious.

*The meaning of experience can be won only through vision, insight, intuition, imagination*—there are many names and each of them throws some light on the way in which the meaning of experience is revealed to men. It is in the flash of understanding that the deeper meaning of experience is revealed to scientists as well as to artists and prophets. The history of science provides as many illustrations of this as does the history of art and religion. In imagination alone are thinking and feeling united and reason at its highest becomes imagination.

*But insight, intuition, vision are not infallible.*

Through them the deepest understanding of life is won, but even so, they are all limited and conditioned. We know only in part and see only in part. Insights, intuitions and visions have to be tested and related in religion as in science. Men have thought that in the mystic experience they had obtained a completely unconditioned experience—an absolute revelation. They have indeed obtained an experience of profound significance. But when they have treated this as complete, unconditioned and infallible, disaster has followed. Professor Rufus Jones has pointed this out in his great work on Quakerism.\*

"Mysticism, as a type of religion, has staked its precious realities too exclusively upon the functions of what to-day we call the sub-conscious. Impressed with the divine significance of 'inward babbings,' the mystic has made too slight an account of the testimony of Reason and the contribution of history. The sub-conscious functions are very real and very important aspects of personal life, and can never again be ignored in any full account of personality. They influence every thought, feeling, attitude, volition, opinion, mood and insight, and are thus operative in all the higher as well as in all the lower phases of human life and character. Metaphorically, but only metaphorically, we speak of the

\*"Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries." p.p. xxviii, xxix.  
(Quoted by kind permission of the publishers, Macmillan & Co.)

sub-conscious as a vast zone, an indefinable margin, surrounding the narrow focus of attention, and we may figuratively, but only figuratively, call it the subliminal 'region' where all our life-gains and often the gains of the race, are garnered. The contributions from this mental underworld, are inestimable—we could not be men without them—but this sub-conscious zone is a source of things bad as well as good, things silly as well as things wise, of rubbish as well as of treasures, and it is diabolical as well as divine. It seems in rare moments to connect, as though it were a hidden inland stream, with the 'immortal sea which brought us hither,' and we feel at times, through its incomes, as though we were aware of *tides* from beyond our own margin. And, in fact, I believe we are.

But obviously we cannot assume that whatever comes spontaneously out of the sub-conscious is divinely given. Its mothers strange offspring—Esau as well as Jacob; its openings, its inrushes, its bubblings, must be severely tested. Impulses of many sorts feel categorically imperative, but some call to deeds of light and some to deeds of darkness. They cannot be taken at their face value; they must be judged in some Court which is less capricious and which is guided by a more universal principle—something *semper et ubique*. A spiritual religion of the full and complete type will, I believe, have inward, mystical depth, it will keep vitalized and intensified with its experiences of divine supplies, and of union and unification with an envioning Spirit, but it must at the same time soundly supplement its more or less capricious and subjective, and always fragmentary, mystical insights with the steady and unwavering testimony of Reason, and no less with the immense objective illumination of History."

*Man's partial insights must be tested and related to each other. And that is the work of reason. The scientist tests his insights by relating them to the facts.* He observes the facts or what appear to be facts (as far as they can be isolated)—by some flash of insight he is able to see some relation between them (or some of them) which gives them meaning. He conceives a theory, a working hypothesis. But no theory does justice to all the facts. Each theory sooner or later brings with it new problems. So once again he returns to the task of observation and experiment. The new facts he thus discovers in turn demand and receive a more adequate explanation. From the generalization to the particulars, and from the particulars to the generalization there is a constant coming and going which gives meaning to the particulars and richness to the generalization. Instead of attempting to interpret all experience by one little piece of it isolated we must try rather to interpret each little piece of experience by the whole. The system is not built up from one part but hangs together like the solar system. There is only one assumption, and it is the assumption that the Universe has reason—a "ratio"—behind it, that somehow it is a



coherent world. This is the primary working hypothesis. If it be invalid then all thought is invalid.

*We also must test our insights by relating them to the rest of human experience.*

Man starts with his partial experiences, tries to understand their significance, obtains some insight which illuminates his experience and enlarges it. In these moments of supreme experience when man receives the flood of revelation he seems for a time to stand outside the rest of experience. In a sense he does—as in the mystic vision—but he cannot remain there. He must return to try out his key experience on the rest of life.

“The mount for vision but below  
The daily paths of duty go.”

The value of the insight will depend on the breadth and depth and height of the experience it includes. First of all naturally comes a man's personal experience but the consistent strenuous attempt to explain this will carry a man further, beyond his own narrow personal experience. In so far as the insight excludes any experience it is partial and incomplete. The experience which it excludes gives the problem—what may be called marginal problems. These must be faced. By facing them the great discoveries are often made. It is sometimes the little awkward fact which will not fit into the hypothesis which compels the creation of another hypothesis. But these marginal problems do not make scientists despair. They stimulate them to look further and lead to new discoveries. This wrestling with difficulties always brings its reward in a new revelation, whereas acquiescence in a final revelation kills the truth that revelation once had. By this method of faith we can never sleep, but we can be at peace. We struggle with difficulties but we struggle with patience. This method satisfies our demands. It tests the objectivity of our vision and separates illusion from experience of the eternal. It enables us to interpret that experience in terms of the life of each day and so enables it to permeate that life.

We can recognize our errors and mistakes without losing heart and we can learn from them. We can admit fearlessly and frankly all we do not know, and all our uncertainties without losing hold on what we have learned. And these marginal problems stimulate us to fit ourselves for a better understanding; we grow; we are able to include a richer content in our experience and all the particulars we have been able to include glow in the light we have seen.

*This way of approach is not popular.* It demands much effort and calls for courage and faith. It has always seemed curious that men who demand a final complete revelation should be regarded as men of faith.

The dogmatist is a man whose faith in his own insights is so weak that he dare not look at these facts which he finds difficult to reconcile

with his insights and so blinds himself. The dogmatist treats his insights as complete and infallible, whereas they are at best partial and always conditioned in some way, by the climate of the age or by the character of the man himself. The sceptic recognizes that the insights are partial and conditioned and denies that they are valid insights at all. The dogmatist demands a hundred per cent. solution of life's problems, and insists that he has such a solution. The sceptic demands a hundred per cent. solution, and refuses to believe anything because he can't find one. The dogmatist and the sceptic are both blind. There is no hundred per cent. solution to the problem of evil or of suffering, and if you demand one, you will soon turn a blind eye to evil and make it unreal or you will turn a blind eye to good. The man of faith is the man who stakes his life on his insights and yet is able to face up to all the problems they bring in the confidence that if he could see all life as God sees it, he would understand better. And because he does not turn a blind eye to facts which are problems he is able to master them and to win new insight.

*There is no hundred per cent. solution of life's problems. There is something better—the sense of taking part in a great adventure whose fuller meaning will only be revealed to you as you face its problems.*

The fact is that men who demand a complete final infallible revelation want that revelation of God's ways to man on too cheap terms. God made man a thinking being, even though his thought is very imperfect. Men who want an infallible revelation may be said to love God with all their heart and soul but not with all their mind. They do not want to use all the powers which God has given them. God has never given men an infallible revelation, and when they have demanded such a revelation or claimed to possess one they have been defying God's purposes and in the long run with disastrous results. That was what turned some of the great saints of the Church into cruel persecutors, claiming the right and even the duty to put heretics to death in the name of Christ. What God has given men is the opportunity of discovering more and more and of rising in the scale of being as they did so. The task is harder but more worth while. God does not want men to be machines or cogs in a big machine. Neither does he want them to become gramophone records. God wants persons, for personality is the highest value we know. And so to each man is given the power of choice to follow his vision or to reject it. See I set before thee this day good and evil; life and death.

We know only in part, but we do know—we do have insights which we may trust. To those who act upon these partial insights, more is revealed. To those who demand full and complete insight or claim to have such insight, from them even those partial insights are taken away. In the last resort the challenge comes to us—"Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right."



# *An Interpretation of History*

FRED KENWORTHY, M.A., B.D.

A SMALL book that was published some three years ago by B. H. Liddell Hart bears the title "Why don't we learn from history?" It contains much interesting comment on men and affairs, by one who has been a close observer of the history that has been made in the last thirty or forty years, and many illustrations drawn largely from the author's own experience. But it is not just the contents of the book with which we are now concerned; the title of the book is attractive and provocative because it appears to be based on two assumptions—first, that it is possible to learn from history, and second, that history has a meaning. That these are Liddell Hart's assumptions is borne out by the manner in which he makes his points—"We learn from history that . . ." This phrase occurs again and again throughout the booklet and the assumption is that by thoroughly digesting the lessons of history, we should be able, if only we were wiser than we are, to profit from past mistakes and so ensure that they are never repeated. History is valuable because of the lessons it offers. Such is the conclusion of one whose judgment makes some claim to be heard, and it is a familiar defence of the study of history. It is interesting, therefore, to compare it with the verdict of one whom we may describe, without doing Liddell Hart any injustice, as a much more learned scholar, and who, until his death was among the forefront of academic historians. In the preface to his very fine "History of Europe," first published in 1936 and since become a best seller, the late H. A. L. Fisher, then Warden of New College, Oxford, made his humble confession. The book begins with neolithic man, and the story is brought up to the fourth decade of the twentieth century. Within those frontiers, wrote Fisher, there were to be found some prospects flattering to human pride, and which it was a pleasure to recall to memory—the flowering of Greek genius, the long Roman peace, the cleansing tide of Christian ethics, and so on—but one intellectual excitement was denied him. "Men wiser than I have discerned in history a plot, a rhythm, a predetermined pattern. These harmonies are concealed from me. I can see only one emergency following upon another as wave follows wave, only one great fact with respect to which, since it is unique, there can be no generalization, only one safe rule for the historian: that he should recognize in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen. This is not a doctrine of cynicism and

despair. The fact of progress is written plain and large on the page of history: but progress is not a law of nature. The ground gained by one generation may be lost by the next. The thoughts of men flow into channels which lead to disaster and barbarism."

Here, then, is the conclusion of a modern historian. It is in startling contrast to what one might have expected, and to what the general reader feels to be the chief justification for the writing of history; it challenges the assumptions that underlie Liddell Hart's book. Fisher has no philosophy of history, and he confesses he has no answer to the question whether history has any meaning. History has no unifying harmony; it is simply one emergency following upon another. In this conclusion, however, he is by no means alone. Professor E. L. Woodward has pointed out that this agnosticism with regard to the significance of history is characteristic of nearly all the great and most learned of British historians, and that whenever any attempt has been made to give a final interpretation of history, it is not put forward by the most learned or the most profound scholars. While the general reader looks for an answer to the question whether the irreversible sequence of events that we call history has any meaning or is moving towards any recognisable or satisfying goal, generally speaking, he will not find it in the works of the great historians. The historian as such, while it is his business to describe and elucidate the sequence of events, does not generally find it within his purview to interpret them in the light of any overriding purposes, or to fit them into any consistent pattern.

For this agnosticism or scepticism with regard to the ultimate meaning of history, there are, of course, certain reasons. In the first place, the historian realises that contrary to what is generally assumed, a knowledge of the past can never provide a clear-cut answer to the question "What does history teach?" in the sense that the lessons drawn from history provide a wholly reliable framework for human conduct in the future. The general reader is apt to look at history from the didactic point of view, and to seek from the record of events, guidance for the future course of human existence. It is he who asks the question "What does history teach?" The historian might reply to this that it is problematic whether history teaches anything at all—for history never repeats itself in the sense that exactly the same historic situation is found to recur more than once. It is always tempting to compare one age with another and often the similarities are striking enough, but the fact is that even when this is so, the total conditions and human environment of any two periods under comparison must nevertheless be different—and so different as to make one sceptical of any inference that might be drawn from the comparison. The resemblance between the Napoleonic era and the past decade, for instance, is sufficiently remarkable—hence the inspiration for Mr. Arthur Bryant's books, and



their deserved popularity. The resemblance is there, of course. An attempt, founded on force, to provide a common political framework for the whole of Europe was made by Napoleon. The attempt failed, and it was frustrated by a coalition of powers, of which Great Britain was the spearhead. The German Führer made a similar attempt and again it has been frustrated by a coalition of powers, with Great Britain to the fore, and at one period standing alone against the enemy, as she did more than once during the longer Napoleonic struggle. But the differences are equally significant. The rise of the U.S.A. is one, the power of the U.S.S.R. another, and overshadowing all else, the use of atomic energy by the victors, a third. Any attempt, therefore, to draw hard and fast conclusions as to future events in this century from what happened after the defeat of Napoleon in the last is not likely to be very fruitful. Again, it might be thought that in the organization of peace after the Six Years' War valuable lessons might be learned from the mistakes that were made in the years that succeeded the Four Years' War. Up to a point, that is true and it would be extremely unwise now to ignore all that might be revealed by an intense study of the world situation, how it deteriorated prior to 1939, and how the League of Nations, which promised so much, failed in the end of its chief purpose—to keep the peace among nations. Nevertheless, the value of the study is still limited in this sense—that even if we had a knowledge of all the facts, and were able to diagnose with complete accuracy the causes of this failure in organization, we should not thereby be in a position to organize again with an unerring hope of success. For the historic situation is still not the same; quite new factors are there; the human environment has changed rapidly; and we have to reckon with what H. A. L. Fisher called the play of the contingent and the unforeseen. They have their part in the development of human destinies, and are entirely unpredictable. This point will be touched upon later; at the moment, we see these factors as those which prevent the historian from dogmatizing on the lessons of history. This is not to doubt the value or the worthwhileness of historical study. It is essential for an understanding of the present, for the attainment of a sane perspective, for him who would “see life steadily and see it whole,” and who seeks an answer to the question “Why?” but it is not necessarily a sure guide to the question “Whither?” For these reasons, the historian who attempts an impartial examination of recorded facts, unless he already has preconceptions on the matter, will be loth to discern any pattern or plot in the march of events.

A disconcerting phenomenon for those who would “learn from history” is that two experts, of equal ability, with equal opportunities of knowing the facts, might derive from them diametrically opposite conclusions—as, indeed, they often do. In his book (*Why don't we learn from*

history, p.p. 53) B. H. Liddell Hart chastises the Allied leaders in the recent war for not learning an elementary lesson in psychology taught by the 1914-18 war, when the German military party was allowed to escape blame in the eyes of the next generation of their countrymen. He condemns the demand for "unconditional surrender" as a mistaken policy. Perhaps it was. But the point is that it was at least an attempt to do what Liddell Hart exhorts us all to do—to "learn from history." The Allied leaders were determined to learn from history to the extent of not again giving the Germans—or the Japanese—an excuse for believing in the years to come that they were not after all defeated in a military sense.

A further reason why historians are unwilling to attempt anything like a final interpretation of history is that to them the history of man is a very short history—as indeed it has been revealed within the last 150 years. In 1779 it was still possible to publish a universal history of the world in which the date of the world's creation was given as 4004 B.C., the time being the autumnal equinox of that year. We are now familiar with other estimates of the age of the earth, in which the life of man is put in an entirely different perspective, as in Sir James Jeans's book, *"The Universe Around Us."* The age of the earth, it is computed, may be about 2000 million years; life has been possible for about 300 million years; man has existed for something like 300,000 years, and human societies which can be dignified by the name civilization for something like 6,000 years. In other words, it is only for the most minute fraction of the time that has gone to the making of the earth as we know it that man has set out to be the master of his environment. Astronomers, geologists, physicists and the rest of the pundits all combine to assure us that the time in front of man is infinitely longer than his story hitherto; the six thousand years of the rise and fall of civilizations may well be followed by millions of years more. So the historian shrinks from explaining a process that has hardly yet begun. The data are insufficient. The only established fact is that while we have some knowledge of what man has achieved, and from time to time glimpses are vouchsafed to us of future achievement, we simply do not know what he may become in the immeasurable æons of time that still confront him. In his monumental work, *"A Study of History,"* of which so far six volumes have appeared, Professor A. J. Toynbee has distinguished twenty-one separate societies which have flourished in the 6,000 years of civilized life. Of these, fourteen are extinct, seven still survive. A survey of these twenty-one civilisations, and especially of the breakdown and disintegration of those that are extinct has, we believe, a salutary effect on our thought. It prevents us from assuming too readily that our Western civilisation is necessarily the apogee of man's upward struggle. A thousand years from now and the shores of the Atlantic may no longer be the centre of the most advanced civilization; it may



well have shifted, for instance, to the East, and the dominant race may not be white in colour. Toynbee writes: "We know of no case in which the goal of human endeavours has been attained yet, while on the other hand we know of fourteen cases in which attempts to attain the goal are proved to have failed irretrievably by the fact that the societies which made them have become extinct. The possibility of attaining the goal is still an open question in the seven cases of the civilizations that are still alive. While there is life there is hope; but in such a complicated and mysterious question it would be rash to prophesy—even on the most plausible appearances—that the prospects of any one of the seven still surviving candidates are assuredly better than those of any of its competitors; and it remains possible and indeed probable that none of the seven is destined to see the Promised Land. The goal of human endeavours may be attained, perhaps thousands or hundreds of thousands of years hence, by some society yet unborn; or the human race itself may become extinct without the goal ever having been attained at all."

For all these reasons, the modern historian, as such, is seen to be unwilling to attempt any final interpretation of history, to seek in history any predetermined pattern or overriding purpose, or even to bring evidence that would point to movement towards a desirable end. In answer to the question: Has history any meaning? often he remains silent. Only fools rush in, it is said, where angels fear to tread; nevertheless, that rash enterprise, in all humility, we would attempt. For in spite of the agnosticism of profound minds, the ordinary man, who looks to the historian, and says "What does it 'all mean?'" and is not satisfied with a purely agnostic answer, is not to be set aside. If we cannot discern any meaning in history at all, if we can make no judgment whatsoever on the value of human existence, we may be, of all men, most miserable. Some such philosophy is necessary to the conduct of life—even the historian, however unwilling he is to commit himself openly, must always act on certain basic assumptions. But he is right in his contention that the process of history in itself does not provide these assumptions with certainty. We would suggest that without a religious view of life we can gain no true insight into the meaning of existence. History has been described as the irreversible sequence of events in time. The study of these events in itself does not necessarily reveal any pattern or purpose. For one who holds a religious view of life, however, and with the element of faith, they can be interpreted. We would suggest that the interpretation which has come down to us through the Jewish-Christian tradition, having its beginning in the Old Testament, and being continued in the New, the view that regards history as the arena of God's activity, is still the one that best meets our needs. John Macmurray, in his book, "*The Clue to History*" (pp. 94ff) says, "History is the action of God." But he continues: "It is also the action of man." History,

he says, has to be thought of both as the act of God in the world, and the act of Man in the world. History is the sphere in which God seeks to realise his intention, his purpose, his will for men in the world. Now this is essentially the thought of the Old Testament and the New Testament—events in the temporal sphere are significant; both the public and the private acts of men have a moral aspect, and they are to be judged in so far as they touch upon the intention or the purpose of God. For the Jewish-Christian tradition, God is the Lord of History. This conception, we would maintain, is still valid; without it, it is difficult to see that history has any meaning. It cannot, of course, be maintained fully in the biblical sense. In the Bible, and especially in the Old Testament, God is conceived as the Lord of History in the sense that he directly controls human destinies and intervenes himself on the stage of history. Examples need not be multiplied; it is sufficient to recall that, for the prophets of the Old Testament, God intervenes time and again in world history in order to achieve his purpose. In Deutero-Isaiah, Cyrus is seen as an instrument raised up by Jehovah for the execution of his purpose; the plague that destroys Sennacherib before the gates of Jerusalem is a specific act of God. The calm sea and the fog on the English channel that facilitated the British evacuation from Dunkirk, might, for this mode of thought, be cited as a modern example. But it is not by intervention, either direct or indirect, that God is the ruler of history. God acts in history in the sense that when men resist the divine intention they go against the structure of life, the real world as God has made it. John Macmurray has expressed it thus: “. . . human intentions which are opposed to the intention of God for man are necessarily self-frustrating. When men set out to realise an intention which is contrary to the divine intention, they do not achieve it. They achieve something that they did not intend. If the intention is the opposite of the divine intention, then they necessarily achieve, not what they intended, but its opposite. . . . There is no need for the intervention of God to frustrate the purposes of men who are in opposition to him without being in opposition themselves.” In other words, the world is so made, and men are so made, that they cannot *permanently* frustrate the purposes of God. They cannot realise for long an intention that is against the will of God. In that sense God is the Lord of History. Macmurray goes on to say that in the end men can never achieve anything but the intention of God—whether our intention conforms to the purpose of God, or opposes it, we cannot achieve anything but the purpose of God.

How, in the light of this dialectic, might the events of the past two decades be interpreted? It was the intention of German Fascism to set up a political order based on the idea of a dominant race which had the right to use the inferior peoples of conquered nations as tools. In so far as we know of the intention of God, this was surely in direct contra-

diction of it. By the nature of reality, and the nature of men, who are, in Macmurray's words, God's act, such an attempt could only have met with failure. We believe that in the long run it would have failed even if the Nazi legions, in 1940, had not stopped short at the English Channel. An attempt to organize human life on a basis that is opposed to the will of God must fail. Nevertheless, the defeat of the Nazis in itself does not mean the full realisation of God's intention. The task of organizing human society in accordance with it still remains. The failure of Nazism has meant the defeat of certain evil forces, and they have been defeated because they could not possibly find a lasting home in the hearts of men. But a stable order of society has not followed automatically, nor could it have been expected. That is only to be achieved by erecting a human structure that is in keeping with the purposes of God for the world which he has created. As has been said, God has so created the world, and God so governs the world, that nothing that is morally unjust, i.e., contrary to the divine intention, can find a permanent home in it. If the structure of human society now being erected in these post-war years is not strong and righteous enough, sooner or later the spirit of man will react against it; the struggle will be resumed, and man will have to start again in building his world. In the words of the Psalm: "Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it."

Macmurray's statement that men against their will always realise the divine intention is criticised by John C. Bennett in his book "*Christian Realism*" (p.51ff) on the ground that it is an over-simplification and too optimistic. Macmurray, says Bennett, gives too little scope to human freedom to resist God. With this criticism we should agree, for surely here lies the recalcitrant element in history—human freedom. It is the element that makes it impossible for the historical process to be schematized. Men are free agents because they are free to flounder indefinitely without realising in a positive way the intention of God. To this human failure, says Bennett, it would be impossible to set any limits. This surely goes a long way to explaining those forces in history which H. A. L. Fisher describes as the play of the contingent and unforeseen; human behaviour is not in any sense completely predictable. It is due to human freedom that the thoughts of men can and do flow into channels which lead to disaster and barbarism, and the ground gained by one generation is lost by the next, and it is human freedom that makes the pattern of history inexplicable. The action of human history is best thought of under the categories of conflict and struggle. It is our judgment of human history that man is struggling, and it is our faith that he is struggling upwards, and the journey in front is infinitely longer than the road he has already come. There is no need to resort to doctrines of the fall of man or of



his total depravity to explain the present plight of mankind; as C. G. Coulton has said, there is no horror even of recent years that cannot be matched from the records of distant centuries, and that fact alone exhorts us to struggle still.

Civilisations rise and fall; a stable society has not yet been achieved, and the prospects of such, at the present stage of man's evolution, seem infinitely remote. Yet it would be wrong to write off the idea of progress altogether. In spite of the fact that civilisations fall into decay, in spite of man's periodical regressions into barbarism, history, says John Oman, has one abiding gain. That has been the moving forward of human ideals. If man's achievement seems to us so meagre, and indeed, so flimsy, it is partly because our ideals have been wider and nobler than any previous generation's. It never occurred to St. Paul, that champion of Christian freedom, that the institution of slavery was incompatible with Christian ethics. Centuries were to pass before, in Christendom, a determined effort to destroy slavery was made, and the battle has not yet been won. In other spheres we are only just catching glimpses of the implications of a nobler view of human dignity. If there is one inference to be drawn from history, it is that no human ideal, once it has flickered, however feebly, into flame, is ever ultimately extinguished; sooner or later, in some new expansion of man's creative achievement, it bursts again into glorious light. This, we would believe, is our great hope that infinite though the prospects are that confront humanity, history does move towards some desirable and realisable goal.

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# Modern Interpretative Criticism

FRANK A. BULLOCK

WHEN in 1903 W. B. Yeats wrote in his essay on "Magic" in *Ideas of Good and Evil*, "I believe in three doctrines, (1) That the borders of our minds are always shifting, and that many minds can flow into one another and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy. (2) That the borders of our memories are just as shifting, and that our memories are a part of the great memory, the memory of nature herself. (3) That this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols," or when in 1904 he suggested in his play *The King's Threshold* that God gave the great images of poetry to men before he gave them wheat, he was expressing in a personal and poetic way ideas which were later, by slight modification to be accepted as a basis for modern interpretative criticism. Yeats's poetical doctrines were mainly derived from William Blake, who, he said, spoke things for whose speaking he could find no models in the world about him. Blake's central doctrine, stated in our language, was that imagination is the supreme instrument of cognition. Or as Wordsworth finely expressed it "Imagination is reason in her most exalted mood." This conception Coleridge stated with even more profound implication in his *Biographia Literaria* (Everyman Edition, p. 159) as follows:—"The Imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite 'I am.' " These scattered references make it clear that there existed a tradition of a high poetical doctrine which affirmed the primal importance and significance of the image-creating and image-perceiving faculties in the human mind. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries came the revolutionary discovery of the unconscious mind, and between 1915 and 1919 Dr. Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious* was translated into English. These discoveries had a great and overwhelming influence on all literary transformations, on techniques, on context, and on language. In the case of Jung's book, apart from its purely technical interest, for Psychology, there were many wide explorations in the fields of ancient mythology and literature, as well as in mediæval and Wagnerian symbolism. Here was an attempt to discover the secrets of creative power in the human mind below the level of conscious invention. These explorations made it appear possible, and indeed almost certain, that all

great literature is dominated by powerful primal images arising out of the unconscious mind. Jung called the realm of the deep unconscious the "collective unconscious," and we may use it tentatively as an adequate image of something real but undefinable. In any case, it replaces, for the moment, Yeats's image of the great memory of nature. A matter of great significance for the future study and interpretation of literature was the suggestion that the creative impulse in great literature arose out of the deep unconscious, and expressed itself in primal images and certain rhythmic movements and patterns towards an always constant, transcendent goal of unity and integration. Jung has himself applied these principles in further studies related to literature in *Modern man in search of a Soul* and in *The Integration of Personality*. The particular essays are *Psychology and Literature* and *Archetypes of the Unconscious*. In these essays he deals briefly with *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Dante, *Faust*, Kierkegaard, and Boehme, as well as certain Eastern writings. These facts are worth mentioning because they suggest the range of the enquiry and present the fruitful conception of a common archetypal pattern of images behind the great literature of every age and race. All the same, it is not certain that modern methods of interpretative criticism arose directly from these sources, though they certainly created the kind of awareness from which the method arose and deeply influenced its development.

However, in 1921, Colin Still published a book called *Shakespeare's Mystery Play, The Tempest*, but it was almost immediately withdrawn from circulation and re-appeared in a much extended form and under a new title in 1936, when it was called *The Timeless Theme*. In this book he contends that all great creative literature tells one story which constitutes the timeless theme, and that this story is an odyssey from the earthly to the spiritual state of consciousness.

The stages of this pilgrimage are represented by the symbols of the ancient elements, earth, water, air and fire, with intermediate stages of mire, mist and rainbow. The author affirms that, just as merely temporal values are reflected in a lesser imaginative art "which deals with the particular and transient experience of individual men and women on the diversifying plane of the senses, so eternal values are reflected in a greater imaginative art which deals with the common and unchanging experience of all humanity on the unifying plane of the spirit." This greater art includes the myths and mystery dramas connected with them, which are the product of collective genius. It includes also great imaginative works by individual genius. The argument develops "by a process of purging and amplifications through time, the best examples of the greater art, but especially the myths and the mysteries, have grown into a universal tradition, which is not only true but permanently true and



true for all men." This universal tradition is a perfected reflection of the sum of mankind's spiritual experience, and a product of collective genius working through all time. Individual genius can never hope to do more in its most exalted utterance than reproduce the universal tradition, or some aspect of it. The voice of genuine individual genius is thus the same in effect as that of collective genius. It has the same things to say and it says them in the same symbolic language. Every utterance of imaginative genius is the reflection of some phase or phases of spiritual experience in terms of natural imagery. There is but one spiritual theme and the sum of all that has been said by collective genius through the ages constitutes the universal tradition which is the living art of all mankind. This universal tradition is the source of "all the mighty songs that miss decay."

The above is a summary of a long passage in which the author expresses the main theme of the book, in the first part of which he works out this idea with many examples and illustrations and in the second part applies all this material to an exposition of *The Tempest*.

Here stress is laid on images and imagination, and Yeats's *Memory of Nature* and Jung's *Collective Unconscious* are replaced by the image of collective genius. This book represents pioneer work in a comparatively new field of exploration, and although fascinating and suggestive, it has grave defects and limitations in matter and treatment. Thus, for instance, the range of imagery or symbolism is too restricted and is related to a goal too narrowly stated. Also the dualism of matter and spirit is fundamentally unsatisfactory. Reality is not finally integrated in our consciousness by throwing away what you may feel to be its inferior aspect. Finally, the author appears to be too anxious to make an unanswerable case for his theory. This suggests a secret doubt in his mind as to its complete validity, at least in the form he has imposed upon his material. The value of the book lies in the accumulation of data pointing to the existence of what will later be called archetypal patterns, which dominate the form and rhythm of all great literature. Later workers in this field were able to free themselves from the fundamental frustration of this particular method which is a too rigid interpretation of these primal images in the interest of an abstract and arbitrary intellectual theory. Beginning in the realm of image and imagination it is fatal to the full development of this method to make a violent transition to the realm of abstract reasoning. Having begun in the spirit, in the spirit let us also walk. Liberation from this frustration has been found along the lines of what is called "free association" to which we will return later. In the meantime, in 1924, D. H. Lawrence produced a very startling and revolutionary book called *Studies in Classic American Literature*. Here, in his own very characteristic way, he insists that the conscious mind of the artist tells one story which suits his conscious purpose, while over his

head the unconscious mind is telling the truth, generally in opposition to the conscious story by means of the images projected in the story. Put very briefly, his theory appears to be that the basic soul of America found expression in the red Indian culture, which was profoundly influenced by what Lawrence calls "The Spirit of Place." This idea has some relation to Yeats's "*Memory of Nature*." European stocks in America have always been in revolt against the soul of Indian culture and its spirit of place. Nevertheless these influences will eventually possess them and then there will appear a unified American consciousness. All Lawrence's studies in American classic literature express and expose, with startling power of insight, this dual context and conflict in the American soul. Here is a characteristic passage from the first chapter: "Men are less free than they imagine; oh, far less free. . . . Men are free when they are in a living homeland, not when they are straying and breaking away. Men are free when they are obeying some deep, inward voice of religious belief. Obeying from within. Men are free when they belong to a living, organic, *believing* community, active in fulfilling some unfulfilled, perhaps unrealised purpose. Not when they are escaping to some wild west. The most unfree souls go west, and shout of freedom. Men are freest when they are most unconscious of freedom. The shout is a rattling of chains, always was. Men are not free when they are doing what they like. The moment you can do just what you like, there is nothing you care about doing. Men are only free when they are doing what the deepest self likes . . . the deepest *whole* self of man, the self in its wholeness. . . ." Whatever we may feel about Lawrence's theories concerning the American soul, and however extravagant much of his language may be, he is expressing something very deeply felt in his own personal experience as an artist, namely, that freedom is only realised in obedience to deep primal urges. This book of Lawrence's is a landmark in the development of modern interpretative criticism, which was not born ready made but has evolved through many stages of imperfect form and expression, and is still evolving. One thing is superbly real for Lawrence, and that is the soul of man and its vast hinterlands of hidden depths out of which the great creative urges and archetypal images emerge. This insight of Lawrence is carried to even greater heights in his last strange book *Apocalypse*, published after his death. There, apart from all his usual vehement protests against all sorts of things and people, we can yet feel his deep understanding of the great archetypal images and of their life-giving and creating power in human life. This is another pioneer book, and one we cannot leave out of account in trying to understand the development of our subject.

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In 1929 there appeared the first of Wilson Knight's studies in Shakespearean interpretation and these studies have continued to appear

over a period of nearly twenty years, the latest, and according to the publisher, the concluding volume, *The Crown of Life* has just been published in 1947. This last work contains an early essay, reprinted under the title of "*Myth and Miracle.*" It was very slight in form, and assuredly drew inspiration from Middleton Murray's interpretative writings on Dostoevsky and *Keats and Shakespeare* and was also related to the work of Colin Still. But the central idea and method was capable of wide and rich expansion, as the subsequent work of the author has shown. Stated briefly it is that Shakespeare, in the last great tragedies, reached the limit of direct representation and that in "Anthony and Cleopatra" the language of conceptual thought breaks down and gives place to a new mystic symbolism in the music that preludes the death of Anthony. Music heard in the air and in the earth. This gives a clue to the understanding of the final group of plays from *Pericles* to *The Tempest*. The further limit of direct representation is here reached. Tragedy is merging into mysticism and what is left to say must be said in terms, not of tragedy, but of myth and miracle. For the mind of Shakespeare, tragedy is resolved in a reality which can only be expressed in symbolism. This first essay was followed in 1930 by *The Wheel of Fire*, in which the author summarised in a long introduction what he conceived to be the ground and sanction for the new principles of Shakespearean interpretation. He begins by making a tentative distinction between interpretation and criticism. In criticism we objectify the work under consideration; we stand outside of it and decide its merits by comparison with other works of a similar nature in the light of our own experience of reality. Interpretation, on the other hand, tends to merge our mind and emotion with the work we seek to understand. We give up our own standards for the time being and try to let the creative work stand in the light of its own nature, employing external references, if at all, only as a preliminary aid to understanding. In other words, interpretation treats the creative consciousness as an independent unity. "Criticism is active . . . interpretation is passive. . . . Criticism is a judgment of vision; interpretation is a reconstruction of vision." What, then, are the great structural laws which operate within this vision and bind it into an organic unity? We must be prepared by a definite act of the mind to see, in the case of Shakespeare, the whole play in space as well as in time. We are looking into a whole relative universe. Every play of Shakespeare has its own atmosphere and everything in the play is related to that atmosphere. For instance, in *Macbeth* it is very difficult to settle on the precise motives of Macbeth and Banquo lying behind the words and actions. But this very vagueness and indecision is just right in the atmosphere of the play. Where "foul is fair and fair is foul," where everything is murky in the presence of supernatural evil. This purely spiritual atmosphere interpenetrates the action, and certain of the



symbols of the play grow directly out of the atmosphere as does the ghost in *Hamlet* or the weird sisters in *Macbeth*. Thus we must not relate these creations to the earth or to any theory of probability but to the universe of special atmosphere they are intended to make real. So, in a Shakespeare play there are two sets of links to keep in mind; the links in time, event following event in time sequence, and the links with the spatial dimension of atmosphere which broods over each play like the encasing heavens round the earth.

At this point we may leave the description of the method and development of modern interpretative criticism and attempt some comments upon the general significance and possible implication of these principles within the widest range of creative thought and literature. There are now many examples of this kind of interpretation from many fields of literature. Space will only allow the mention of four out of a great number of excellent books: *The Labyrinth*, edited by S. H. Hook in 1933, dealing with the relation between myth, ritual, and images in the ancient world; *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*, by Maude Bodkin in 1934; *Through the Cumæan Gates*, by W. F. Jackson Knight in 1936, which deals with Initiation Patterns in Vergil's *Aeneid*; and *Herman Melville, the Tragedy of Mind*, by William Ellery Sedgwick in 1945. These, and many other examples available, make it clear that this method of approach represents a moment of thought of considerable significance and extent. Emphasis is laid to-day on "the pattern of reality."

That pattern gives us a valuable clue to the nature and quality of reality. When we apply this clue to great art, music and poetry, we come to realise that just because these great creations of the mind give us significant patterns, they also give us an awareness of reality in ever-increasing degrees of value, according to the quality of life revealed in these patterns. And here emerges the vital change towards creative art and literature revealed by the methods of interpretation we have been considering. In the past we tried to test these patterns by reference to an outside standard which we called reality. Now we discover that these patterns of art, music and literature, and especially of poetry, exist in their own right. Our activity towards them is not to reduce them to conformity to any outside standard but to raise our minds and emotions to the experience of the new richness of life expressed and disclosed in these evocative manifestations. Thus human genius attains a new universal significance in that the mind of genius appears to draw upon a wide range of inner consciousness more closely related to the secret springs of ultimate reality than that which is accessible to the consciousness of ordinary men and women. Thus, by the means of these creations of genius, we have authentic insight into the deepest secrets of life.

Sometimes the inflow from the hidden central sea of life is manifested and disclosed through many minds in a great creative epoch. Such

was that which occurred in Hebrew Literature from the 3rd to the 4th Century B.C., or in Greece in the 5th Century B.C., or in the first century of the Christian era. Sometimes it is manifested in the work of a single mind as in Dante or Shakespeare. But in either case the literature thus produced will reveal richer and deeper qualities of soul life and contain higher significance of symbol and image than the writers are aware of in their normal consciousness. They seem to be used by the unknown creative spirit to express one or many of the infinite patterns of reality. Is it possible then, that we have in this modern method of approach a new liberation of interpretation as applied to biblical and other classical primary religious literature? It would be a great deliverance to be set free from bondage to pure historicism, to be able to feel that the great images, symbols and patterns of religious literature have a universal significance, a kind of absolute value apart from their historical setting. The literature of the Bible is profoundly rich in these particular elements, but we are in need of some principle of interpretation by which the primal poetry of the great myths and legends of Genesis, the glowing images of the prophetic books, the atmosphere of ecstasy and rapture interpenetrating the myth of the nativity, and the tender legend of the resurrection in the Gospels may be made to yield new depths of primal and universal significance. Such methods of interpretation will have nothing to say on the strictly historical side of the matter but will have much to say in relation to the timeless theme of the life-drama of the soul. It could result in giving us a new realisation of the sublime poetry of religion in the Bible, with an added awareness that poetry, understood in its deepest significance, is a revelation of the profoundest depths of creative spiritual life. But one principle must first be firmly established. All such material of image, symbol, pattern and atmosphere must be handled with great sensitivity of insight and imagination or it may easily degenerate into a new kind of dogmatism. The principle of free association mentioned earlier is of supreme importance in this connection. Freedom from historicism will end in a worse bondage of the mind if we go on to say that these images must be confined to one meaning. They have many meanings and reflect new light in many and various relationships. They contain a potency of evocation which illuminates the depths of our mind and the experience of the past.

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Finally we may ask what is this amazing process whereby what is, at one time experienced in simple consciousness, passes into the unconscious and after periods of latency varying from stages in the single life-span of the individual, to centuries or millennia in the collective life of humanity, re-emerges as poetry with deep emotional powers, in images, symbols and patterns? When we say these are primal images, archetypal patterns, in what sense do we mean they are primal? Primal in the sense

of time, or primal in the sense that they draw eventually from some Universal Mind which is first in order of being and quality? This latter significance is the one we would emphasize. These primal images reveal some deep and subtle relation between the experiencing medium of human consciousness and some vaster primal mind, in which experience is finally shaped into images and powers of destiny.

And so all the elements of our present bewildering experience are also potential disclosures of the Primal Mind. As yet we only dimly apprehend them as facts, we cannot as yet feel them as poetry; but when we do begin to apprehend them in a deeper way, they are felt as tragic confusions and conflicts. This sense of tragedy is the beginning of transmutation, for tragedy is an awareness of poetry, though in the greatest poetry it is transmuted into a beauty beyond tragedy. So we may look forward in hope to that, as yet unimaginable glory, when the vastness of universes, and æons of time and history and all the unutterable ranges of experience shall be felt and seen as one inclusive pattern and image of that Primal Mind which still does, and everlastingly will, transcend them all.





## *The Unpardonable Sin*

R. TRAVERS HEREFORD, D.D.

THE famous passage in the Gospels in which Jesus is represented as saying that a certain mysterious sin against the Holy Spirit is unpardonable, has been a source of perplexity to every thoughtful reader. However individual readers have met the difficulty in their own case, there has never, so far as I know, been a generally accepted solution of the problem. But, so long as the problem remains unsolved, it disquiets the mind or even haunts the imagination of the reader. It cannot be dismissed as a fiction, for, as a problem, it still exists; and it will continue to exist until some explanation is given of how it came to be a problem at all, an explanation sufficiently clear and intelligible to satisfy any reasonable mind.

It is my purpose to offer such an explanation, and I do so with the greater confidence because it is based on facts which are not within the reach of the reader who reads the Gospels only in English, or even in Greek. The whole trouble has arisen from not taking into account the language which Jesus himself spoke, and from ignoring the Jewish ways of thought and expression, in a word, from leaving out of reckoning the help afforded by the Talmud and the Rabbinical literature in general. No doubt much has been done to make use of post-biblical Hebrew for the illustration of the New Testament as a whole, but not enough; and, in regard to the particular subject before us, the doctrine of the Unpardonable Sin, no use at all, so far as I know, has been made of it, except in the explanation which I now offer. That explanation I first put forward in my book *"Pharisaism, its Aim and its Method"* 1912; but that book has long been out of print, and little, if any, notice was taken then or since of the remarks about the Unpardonable Sin. The present article is a sort of second edition of the particular passage of my *"Pharisaism."*

In the time that has elapsed since I wrote that book, I have become more firmly of opinion that the explanation here offered really does solve the problem. To this I now proceed.

In Mark iii, 28-30, are the words: "Verily I say unto you all their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith so ever they blaspheme; but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin; because they said 'He hath an unclean spirit.'" "

With this compare Matt. xii, 31-32: "Therefore I say unto you every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in that which is to come." Part of the above is repeated in Luke xii, 10.

The starting-point of the proposed explanation is the phrase in Mark iii, 29, "hath never forgiveness"; and the reason for so choosing it is that it corresponds exactly to a Hebrew phrase in the Talmud, used in a closely similar connexion. The Hebrew words are "*en lo mehilah olamith.*" The longer phrases "but is guilty of an eternal sin," and (it shall not be forgiven him) "neither in this world nor in that which is to come," are mere expansions of "hath never forgiveness," made by men who supposed that they were setting forth the true meaning of that phrase, but who in fact gave a wrong interpretation of the words because they did not know the language in which they were spoken. In that language the phrase would be "*en lo mehilah olamith.*"

In the Palestinian Talmud occurs a passage which throws a good deal of light upon the Gospel text before us. This Talmud is written in a language to which that spoken by Jesus was closely akin, a fact which makes it more effective when used in illustration of words of Jesus. The passage in this Talmud (j. B.Kam 6c) contains a discussion about forgiveness, in the course of which it is said that if a man is on bad terms with his fellowman (in his black books, as we should say) he will go to his enemy and ask his forgiveness. If he does not obtain it he may take with him two or three friends and again go to his enemy. A Rabbi then remarks: "This will do if it be not a case of slander; but if he has put forth an evil name against his fellowman, *he hath not forgiveness for ever, en lo mehilah olamith.*" Here we have the identical words which lie behind the text in Mark iii, 29, "hath never forgiveness." I do not, of course, suggest that the Gospel writer borrowed his text from the Talmud, which would be absurd. But I do suggest that, in writing this text in his Gospel, he was trying to render into Greek words whose meaning he did not fully understand, and whose usage in common Hebrew speech he did not know.

It will be observed that the Talmud passage refers to affronts or wrongs between one man and another, and does not raise the question of God's forgiveness or otherwise of the wrong done. What it amounts to is a declaration that slander is so grave an injury inflicted by one man on another, that it is hardest of all to forgive, so hard as to be practically unpardonable. This is in accord with the usual Jewish teaching on the question. But the further question may fairly be asked: "What is the exact meaning of the word "*olamith,*" which is correctly rendered by

"never" or "not . . . for ever"? The Talmud again provides the answer. In jM.Kat. 83d mention is made of several practices to be observed by mourners after a bereavement. One such practice is that of rending the garments, which was done by cutting the garment with a knife, into two pieces. The question was raised whether it was lawful to sew the pieces together again in order not to lose altogether the use of the garment. The answer was that in cases where there was no relationship to the deceased, the torn pieces might be sewn together after seven days; where there was a closer relationship they might be sewn together after thirty days; "but," says the Talmud, "if it is a case of the death of father or mother, they do not sew the pieces together *olamith*," "forever," in other words, "not at all." There can be no possible reference here to eternity; the meaning is suitable to things common and commonplace, and not to those of a higher realm of thought.

Now, in the light afforded by the Talmudic passages cited above, consider the Gospel text in Mark iii, 28-30. It is clear that Jesus here is repelling a gross slander; as is shown by the words in v. 30 "because they said He hath an unclean spirit," which gives the reason why Jesus spoke as he did. He was concerned to denounce a wrong done by men to men, and the question did not arise, whether God would or would not forgive such wrong. That implication was only brought in by the Evangelist or his informant who did not understand the meaning and use of the words in question. The particular offence of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit consisted in the assertion that Jesus cast out devils not by the Holy Spirit but by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. This denial of the agency of the Holy Spirit made the slander against the man who was slandered the worst possible; but the wrong done was such as needed the forgiveness of the man, not that of the Holy Spirit. It is the human slander which is pronounced unpardonable, hardest of all to forgive. The action of God towards the sinner is left entirely out of consideration, alike by Jesus and by those whom he denounced.

The foregoing explanation is based on the common speech and the usual ways of Jewish thought most likely to be those current in the time of Jesus. And, if it be a valid explanation, it implies that Jesus in what he said in the passage before us was in general agreement with the Jewish ideas on the subject. But it may be objected that Jesus would not be limited by current Jewish thought or practice, and that he may have intended to teach a new and tremendous doctrine about a sin that could never be forgiven. Certainly he showed on occasion that he would not be so limited, if he had something new to say. But, if that was the case in the passage before us, then it is to be observed first, that his hearers did not challenge his assertion, although in its new and tremendous meaning it contradicted all their deepest convictions. When Jesus appeared to assert for himself the right to forgive sins, they said (Mark ii, 7) "Why



doth this man thus speak? He blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins but one, even God?" Men who could so challenge his words, would surely have challenged the assertion that there was a sin which God would never forgive. That no such challenge is recorded goes to show that the words in question were never so understood. It is to be observed, secondly, that if Jesus had intended the words in question in the new and tremendous meaning ascribed to them, he would have contradicted all that he elsewhere taught about God's forgiveness.

In all his teaching recorded elsewhere on the subject he laid down the general principle that God always forgave the sinner who repented, and in none of the passages in which such teaching is recorded does he give the least hint that there was one terrible exception to God's forgiveness. In fact the two passages in Mark iii and Matt. xii, partly repeated in Luke xii, 10, are the only places in which mention is made of an unpardonable sin. If they were omitted there would be nothing in all the Gospels to suggest that there was such a sin.

In the foregoing discussion, I have shown that the words of Jesus, in the passage in question, find a simple and intelligible explanation on the lines of ordinary Jewish speech and thought; that the form in which the Gospels present the doctrine is due to ignorance of the language which Jesus spoke and consequent misrepresentation of his meaning; that if he meant what the doctrine in the Gospels is thought to imply, he would be contradicting without challenge the convictions of all Jewish teachers and would be denying all his own teaching upon God's forgiveness.

The conclusion seems to be justified that the doctrine of the Unpardonable Sin, as usually represented, is a theological fiction, to which nothing of truth and reality belongs.



# *A Case for Petitionary Prayer*

WALLACE TAVENER

**I**F TRUTH is a mass of facts, the greater portion of it must always be vastly uninteresting to us. But when we feel that some portion or aspect of truth has a practical point for us, our interest is engaged and our action affected. "What is truth?" is then no jest.

It is all very well to seek to establish religious truths by logical means, but what engages our interest in them is not their abstract validity, but their practical influence. A great number of ordinary people will readily agree (unconsciously endorsing the view of David Hume) that reasonable men should believe in, rather than deny, the existence of God, but will indicate that they do not consider this belief to be of any immediate importance.

If we are asked what practical effect religion has, we answer that it has the effect of influencing us to goodness. Admittedly this is not what the fashionable evangelicals say. "I have never told people to be good," declared Pat McCormick, "and I have actually attacked this idea as the objective of the Christian." That is the kind of thing that comes to be said after Paul is edited by the Calvinists. But with our eyes directly on the preaching of Jesus, and expressing the common intelligence of mankind, we, here, simply must say that religion is meant to help us to be good. If religion is not the essential philosophy and the practical making of the good life we may as well write it off as a piece of superfluous mumbo-jumbo, which, indeed, a great number of people suppose it to be.

If we are asked by what method, in what characteristic way, the truth of religion comes as an active influence for good upon us, the answer, sooner or later, must be, by prayer. If we believe that God has goodness to offer it is by prayer that we will avail ourselves of the offer. It is by that process that the connection will be made, and the latent fact of God's goodness will become the manifest activity of goodness in our world.

Prayer is desire as it rises into consciousness. We wish for what we want and value, and in all sorts of ways declare our wish. It might be said that *all* desire, unexpressed and even unconscious, is prayer. But by proper custom we think of it as a thing uttered, a wish consciously acknowledged, a desire avowed with the deepest sincerity. This utterance, whether in private or public, is prayer. That some prayers are misconceived and darkened by ignorance goes without saying. That is why the practice of prayer requires our attention.

There are two general difficulties about the modern understanding of prayer. We notice the first when we observe the discussion of prayer by Churchmen slithering into evasions. This evasiveness is specially marked in the matter of petitionary prayer—the prayer that asks and, in asking, expects a response. One takes the impression that in many quarters the simple, direct belief in the efficacy of petitionary prayer has come to an end; that it has come to an end in explanations that explain away. If the recent little book of selections from the writings of the late Archbishop Temple is consulted, it will be seen that the Archbishop explains petitionary prayer so as, in effect, to set it aside, and to put in its place the act of resignation. But resignation is the direct opposite of petition. And the question is too serious to be treated with this sleight-of-hand, for, as prayer is the keystone of religion, so is the petition the keystone of all prayers. It is probable that a Christianity that no longer believes in petitionary prayer in some form is at the end of its term of life.

The second difficulty occurs where the simple, untutored belief in petitionary prayer gives rise to frustration and confusion. Not long ago prayers were required to be offered up that the rain should cease, and that the harvest might have a better chance of being gathered in. But at the hour when such prayers were being raised up throughout the land, the rain redoubled its drenching downpour! One can compassionate the sincere believers in their shock and bafflement at this vivid demonstration of their prayer's ineffectiveness. It would appear from such episodes either that such prayer is an idle vanity or that the Deity is at complete loggerheads with the highest Church authorities!

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As to the first difficulty—how does the serious and intelligent mind become evasive on this question? It begins when the devout believer comes to think that it is an impertinence to suggest anything at all to the eternal mind of God. One can appreciate such diffidence. In our developed thought of God, separating Him from all the imperfections of creation, we have invested Him with every kind of perfection and completeness. The more we have done this in our philosophy of religion the more, in our practice of religion, it has become incongruous for us to try to influence His judgment. The perfect, all-wise, all-knowing, all-powerful deity is in need of no suggestion from such finite and imperfect creatures as ourselves. On these lines we naturally come to think at last only of the duty of resignation. But in this the original idea of prayer has broken down. Resignation seems to lose the old moral activism of Christianity, the sense of men and women being energetic co-workers with God. We may well suspect a mistake somewhere in our theories, in our over-stressed supernaturalistic theology, in our emphasis on a God who is above and beyond the imperfections of the



natural world. Having attached to Him all the superlative words and ideas we can hit upon, we are left with a God whose activity we have killed with compliments and whom we have de-characterised by abstractions.

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The question of God's relation to the natural world comes up also when we consider the other difficulty—the frustration of the simple, artless believers. Both difficulties bring us to the business of clearing up our idea of God's relation to nature.

This is not so difficult a matter if we can once drop our conventional and formal suspicions of "natural religion," "pantheism," and the like. We should begin by forgetting the "isms" and think simply and consistently of God as the God of nature, refusing to let go the master-thought of the Creator-God which is given on the first page of the Old Testament and which goes through the whole Bible to the sermons of the Apostles. A steady light will then begin to play upon our question, and in it we shall begin to see the rationale of petitionary prayer.

The energy of the Creator-God is exercised throughout the physical creation by the forms of law. The maintenance of law in nature is our great good. On that all the strength of our knowledge and science is based. We must live in accordance with the laws of nature which God has made. By their regularity we live. Anything coming by way of caprice in nature—anything erratic, incoherent, unreliable—is dangerous to us. It would be God breaking faith with us, and would ultimately mean sending us back to the pit of animal savagery and servitude. God's law is our emancipation.

But if God does not run nature by His own caprice, how much less will he run it on the occasional urgencies and panic requests of men. To think suddenly of God as the means of stopping too much rain or increasing too little—this idea of manipulating God's will to our convenience—is the very belly of superstition, the gibbering of bogus witchcraft.

We praise God and worship Him for the regularity of nature, not for imaginary arbitrary interventions in it. The wise man will thank God that miracles in that sense do not occur and that He is deaf to the vagrant advice of certain parties of the church.

But since, in religion, we must have some mind for miracle, let us fasten on the idea of miracle in its simplest content. This is not the technical notion of the contradiction of natural law, but the poetic, fresh and child-like sense of wonder, delight and awe. The work of religion is to present existence itself, in its totality, as miracle in this sense. This is the one and only miracle. The conjuring-trick type of miracle is only for the irreligious mind that has become bored with existence, and has lost sight of the Biblical idea of creation.

The first point then, is that nature is a present process of creation and man is part of it. The next point is that, in his part of nature, in his sphere, man is not without some authority and responsibility. He is not only a creature of God but also, to some unknown extent, a creature of his own will and wish. He is in the making by God and also by himself. When man was made in the image of God it was the Creator-God in whose likeness he was made. The work of man, religiously conceived, is to bring these two creative urges into unison. It is when men consciously and truthfully try to bring their wills and wishes into a deliberate relationship with the deep, universal, authentic, energetic and instinctive powers of creation that they are praying. That this is a real psychic event a thousand lives will testify. Literature is full of such moments. It is a spiritual actualism in which all religious experience, pagan as well as Christian, finds a common ground. It is the moment of approach of the human and the divine, from the libido of each, which Paul seems to have in mind when he speaks of the Spirit of Creation and our Spirit seeking one another in a common aspiring desire which neither alone can perfectly articulate.

So we can think of prayer as the reaching out of the spirit of man so as to make contact with the creative power in the universe and reinforce his best desire with all psychic force available. It is altogether petitionary prayer.

And for what is mankind thus to pray? Not for interventionist miracles but for moral increase. For one thing and no other, variously needed in his varying situations—for goodness. Nothing is of consequence for man beside this. This prayer is an imploring of the life-force to be in our life, whatever it is elsewhere, a moral enrichment. It is to this sort of prayer that answer is always received.

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A transcendent creation is at work in the world, and, by our prayer, we influence what that creation may do in us. The Creator-God is the creator of an infinite variety, and we—men and women of free-will—pray for that variation proper to us in our world. There is one variational characteristic which, amongst all nature, is unique to the human world, and that is goodness. From the energies of all creation we evoke by our prayer that quality in our world.

Only mechanically, not psychically, can we influence the creational process in nature outside us, but we can direct by our supplications the creative process in us.

Created things are nowhere static. Neither the physical nor moral world is in a state of perfection. Both are in process, and the moral world is very young and has far to go, as our prophets witness. It is in the moral world that we are authentic creators. Though to what extent we never know till we put it to the test. It is certainly in this moral

world that our desire and will count for much where prayer is effective.

Our experience of the moral world is as though that world were only half made. William James speaks of "a half-wild, half-saved universe to which our nature is adapted." Our nature is adapted to this situation because it is creative, active, seeking. It does matter in this kind of world what we wish for and, by the intensity of our wishing, pray for. We should sometimes think that it is a world that needs our prayers as much as we do ourselves.

It is not for us to try to say here what God is, but only to observe that He is manifested to us not as perfection and completion, but as a fluent power capable, through natural law, of everything that is and of more than we can imagine. In our human world it is our right way of life to make a way for that power always in the direction of goodness as best we can understand it. While nature shows power, order, variety and beauty, we bring to it, as our characteristic contribution, our disposition to distinguish between good and evil and our capacity for moral decision. We know of goodness by learning of it, by history, by tradition, by our teachers, by trouble, by indignation, by self-examination, by the dialectics of experience. To pray is wholeheartedly to wish that what we know may become clearer, and that we ourselves may become more like what we know; to seek knowledge of our duty and the strength to perform it.

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Amongst the realities of petitionary prayer there is one aspect, which cannot be regarded without some feeling of dismay and alarm. Prayer—effective prayer—can be offered up on behalf not only of goodness, but also on behalf of wickedness. We can see this on all hands. The desires, the prayerful wishing and willing, of many conspicuous characters of recent years have been not only ignorant, deluded and selfish, but positively outrageous and malignant. The problem of evil prayers is the most overlooked side of the whole question. But it is just this aspect of it that shows us how urgent and critical the whole subject is. Some might argue that it is unthinkable that God should answer evil prayers. But if energy in some effective degree were not at the disposal of evil as well as good, then no active evil would ever have any power; and if only one kind of desire were allowed to have any power there could be no free will for us. But experience shows us both that evil desire can produce an active energy, and that man is capable of freedom.

It is therefore all the more important to examine what our prayers are. We have noticed that it is no use to pray for weather-changes and such like. We remarked that it was only in the moral sphere that prayer is effective. We now must also see that it is not unavailing to pray, in our imperfect moral experiments and endeavours, for the wrong things, in the sense of wicked things. As our strong desires are often unregenerate

and essentially selfish so can our prayers be—if we do not watch as well as pray.

The importance of the practice of prayer is in observing its disciplines; to search our hearts; in the very act of prayer to see that our prayers are worthy prayers. Prayer is not only the expression of our desires, but also their subjection to an unflinching scrutiny before the highest possible standards—before the whole idea of universal meaning. We bring our most earnest desires before the highest conceivable tribunal, not only to utter them but to test them and, as often as not, to learn to transform them.

That is why, although we have said that prayer is our intense desire, it is not, in its religious context, merely that. It is our intense desire subjected to the searching, purging and transforming act of prayer before God.

And that is why one's notion of God is important. There are many kinds of gods before whom the meanest and most stupid prayers are appropriate. The Nazis were logical enough when they degraded their gods in order to free themselves to sanctify their atrocious claims against life. Superstition will encourage any sort of prayer—prayer darkened by paltry anxiety, private ambition, feeble craving, death-wishing and every kind of grotesque impulse. The practice of prayer has, indeed, a long and pandemoniac fore-story of magic, but true prayerfulness and its real force are only understood when our ideas of God are stripped of every septic vestige of superstition.

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There are five notes in the teaching of Jesus on prayer. From these one can see that to appreciate the Christian view of prayer it is necessary to shake oneself free from much debased custom and orthodox argument.

1. Prayer's true attitude is the supplication of the necessitous spirit, aware of its deficiency. (Lk. 18 : 10-14.)

2. The searching prayer of the heart, struggling to face up to its own individual experience, must, for the sake of naked honesty, be interior, private and secluded. (Mt. 6 : 5-6.)

3. There should also be public, corporate prayer, expressing social needs and aspirations. This, for honesty's sake, should avoid sanctimonious padding and all showmanship of sanctity. (Mt. 6 : 7-15.)

4. The success, the effectiveness, of petitionary prayer depends, quite simply and directly, upon the energetic persistence—a sort of spiritual clamour—of the petitioner. (Lk. 11 : 5-8; 18 : 1-8.)

5. The object of petitionary prayer is not "providential" miracle but accession of the Holy Spirit. (Lk. 11 : 9-13.)





# Tales for Telling

*A Guide to Stories in or "near" the Bibles of the World*

WILL HAYES

THE books on preaching tell us that ministers may deliver the same sermon to the same congregation in a year's time—provided that the illustrations are changed. And some writers have no doubt given further advice. It is unwise to use old illustrations in a new sermon; for the result is that many listeners think they have heard the whole sermon on some previous occasion!

This means that ministers must have a good supply of Tales for Telling. And the best Source-Book for such stories is the Sacred Literature of the World. I use the phrase with a wide meaning. I have said "in or 'near,'" for some of the best stories are "near" rather than in the Bibles of the World.

Commentaries are "near" the Bibles, and some contain fine stories. Also there are large bodies of literature that can truly be called "Near-Scriptures." A slight change in the course of events, and the emergence of the right kind of prophet at the psychological time, and a veritable Religion with a Canon of Scripture, might have come from any of the following five sources: (1) American Indian Stories, (2) *The Kalevala*, (3) *The Eddas*, (4) Celtic Tales, (5) Maori Legends. And the list could be extended. It would, of course, include the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of Homer and the Writings of the Stoics.

In these "Near-Scriptures" there are many good tales. Every preacher ought to know the story of The Calumet, with its relic of Matriarchy, and that wonderful tale of the Good Earth—The Old Woman Who Never Dies. The American-Indian story of Iktomi's Blanket makes a fine illustration, as also does the Finnish tale of the Finding of Iron. . . . "The Mantle of Brigid covers the world," I can hear the preacher say. "And all men dwell under the Eye of Tiki."

The Great Religions are best taken in chronological order—as far as this is possible.

Brahmanism (becoming Hinduism) has many Bibles. The oldest—the *Rig Veda*—is the source of the world's most ancient stories: Cinderella, Snow White, Beauty and the Beast, and Jack and the Bean-stalk. But this statement must not be misunderstood. In the *Rig Veda* there are no finished stories. The raw material of the stories is there.

For actual stories and parables we must turn to the Brahmanas and the Upanishads, sacred books which originated as "commentaries" on the Vedas. Later are the Epics—the *Ramayana* and the *Maha-bharata*

—with still more stories. And, finally, outside the canon altogether, is the best of all Hindu story-books—the *Pancha-tantra*.

The method of teaching by means of stories was invented, we are told, in order to instil some sense into three princes who were “supreme blockheads.”

The ordinary teaching methods were of no use with these “dunder-heads of princes,” so they were put in charge of a wise man who, by means of tales about birds and animals, taught them all about the loss and the winning of friends and all about problems connected with peace and war.

In the *Pancha-tantra* (and also in the *Hitopadesa* or “Book of Good Counsels,” which is a shortened version of the *Pancha-tantra*, one tale leads to another. In this wise :—

#### BHARUNDA BIRDS

A Dove-King named Gay-Neck, with hundreds of dove retainers, was wandering in search of food, and spied rice-grains from afar. Heedless of the fact that a snare was spread at this spot, Gay-Neck greedily sought to eat the rice-grains and alighted in the snare. The moment he did so, he and his retainers were caught in the meshes.

Then Gay-Neck, with much presence of mind, said to the doves, “Have no fear, my friends. We must all agree in purpose, must fly up in unison, and carry the snare away. This is not possible without united action. For death befalls those of disunited purpose. As the saying goes : “ ‘Bharunda birds will teach you why

The disunited surely die :

For single-bellied, double-necked,

They took a diet incorrect.’ ”

“How was that?” asked the doves. And Gay-Neck told the story of the bharunda birds.

“By a certain lake in the world lived birds called bharunda birds. They had one belly and two necks apiece. While one of these birds was sauntering about, his first neck found some sweet food. Then the second said, ‘Give me half.’ And when the first refused, the second neck angrily picked up poison somewhere and ate it. As they had one belly, they died.

“And that is why I say,

“ ‘Bharunda birds will teach you why . . .’  
and the rest of it. Thus union is strength.”

When the doves heard this, being eager to live, they united their efforts to carry the snare away, flew just like an arrow-shot into the air, formed a canopy in the sky, and proceeded without fear.

How apt is this tale for our times ! Only in these latter days are we learning, slowly and painfully, that the world has but one belly !

Hinduism is rich in stories. The high-lights (apart from the tales of the *Pancha-tantra*) are the parables in the *Chandogya Upanished*, including the Parable of the Fig Tree, the stories told of Rama and Sita and of the Sons of Pandu, the story of Savitri and Satyavan, the tale of Prahlada, and the stories that come in the life of Krishna the Saviour. These latter are to found in the *Puranas*.

In Buddhist literature we find three main groups of stories : (1) The stories that have gathered round the person of the Buddha, and the parables used by the Blessed One in his sermons and talks; (2) The Legends in the Commentary on the *Dhammapada*; (3) The *Jataka Tales*.

The story of How the Snails Saved the Buddha from Sunstroke, and the tale of Kisagotami and the Mustard Seed, belong to the first section of the first group, and in the second section of this group are such parables as The Man Pierced with the Arrow (*Majjhima Nikaya*), and The Blind Men and the Elephant (*Udana*). One story from the Medium-Length Discourses I give in full :

#### THE PARABLE OF THE RAFT

"Using the figure of a raft, brethren," said the Buddha, "will I teach you the Norm, as something to leave behind, not to take with you. Do you listen to it. Apply your minds. I will speak."

"Even so, Lord," replied those brethren to the Exalted One.

The Exalted One said : "Just as a man, brethren, who has started on a long journey sees before him a great stretch of water, on this side full of doubts and fears, on the further side safe and free from fears; but there is no boat to cross in, no causeway for passing over from this side to the other side. Then he thinks thus : 'Here is a great stretch of water . . . but there is no boat. . . . How now if I were to gather together grass, sticks, branches and leaves, bind them into a raft, and resting on that raft paddle with hands and feet and so come safe to the farther shore ?'

"Then, brethren, that man gathers together sticks . . . and comes to the farther shore. When he has crossed over and come to the other side he thinks thus : 'This raft has been of great use to me. Resting on this raft and paddling with hand and foot I have come to the farther shore. Suppose now I were to set this raft on my head or lift it on to my shoulders and go my ways ?'

"Now what think ye, brethren? Would that man in so doing have finished with that raft ?"

"Surely not, Lord."

"Doing what then, brethren, would that man have finished with that raft? Herein, brethren, that man who has crossed and gone to the farther shore should think thus : 'This raft has been of great use to me. Resting on it I have crossed to the farther shore. Suppose now I haul up this raft on to the shore and go my ways.' By so doing,

brethren, that man would have finished with that raft.

"Even so, brethren, using the figure of a raft have I shown you the Norm, as something to leave behind, not to take with you. Thus, brethren, understanding the figure of the raft, *ye must leave righteous ways behind, not to speak of unrighteous ways.*"

It may be noted here that the disciples of the Buddha also used parables. The story of the Man with the Load of Hemp, told by Kassapa to Payasi the warrior, is one of the best of all Buddhist tales for telling. But it must have taken some time in the telling, for its literary form is that of "The House that Jack Built."

The Legends of the second group (translated by Burlinghame) will be found conveniently gathered into three big volumes of the Harvard Oriental Series.

The Jataka Book must have special mention. For it is the finest collection of good Tales for Telling in the whole literature of the world. The earliest known version of many famous stories will be found there. Later on they were used in the *Pancha-tantra*, in *Æsop's Fables*, the the Arthurian Legends, the stories of Herodotus and Boccaccio, and the tales of Chaucer and La Fontaine. The Book is made up of five hundred and fifty stories of previous lives of the Buddha, and the tales are told by the teacher himself. This does not mean that the whole collection contains only five hundred and fifty stories. Some of the longer Jataka Tales are themselves collections of stories! The *Maha-ummagga Jataka* makes a book of two hundred and forty pages, and interwoven into the main theme are one hundred and fifty shorter tales!

The complete Jataka Book makes six big volumes. The best "Selection" is that published by the Cambridge University Press. But there are many others. A well-printed collection was included in the Treasure House of Eastern Story. And as long ago as 1910 a volume of Jataka Tales (under the title "*Eastern Stories and Legends*") was published by Routledge "for narration and later reading in schools."

Zoroastrianism has a few good stories. Some are to be found in the *Zend Avesta* and in the later Pahlavi Scriptures. There is the story of Yima, the Parsi Noah. The fight is not against floods but against frost. And there is the story of the Temptation of Zoroaster. Perhaps the most beautiful tale is that which tells of one of the faithful ones who reached the next world and there met the fairest maid he had ever seen. "What maid art thou?" he asked. She answered him, "O thou youth of good thoughts, good words and good deeds . . . I am thy own conscience! . . . I was lovely, and thou madest me still lovelier; I was fair, and thou madest me still fairer; I was desirable and thou madest me still more desirable; I was sitting in a forward place and thou madest me sit



in a foremost place, through this good thought, through this good speech, through this good deed of thine."

Another good Parsi story is in S. A. Kapadia's *Teaching of Zoroaster*" (Wisdom of the East Series)—the tale of the Man whose Foot was in Heaven.

Turning to the native religions of China, Taoism comes first, both in point of time and in wealth of stories. There are no stories in the *Tao Teh King*, but in the later Scriptures some choice tales are to be found. Five good ones in the Book of Chuang Tzu are : (1) The Ugly Woman Who Knitted Her Brows, (2) The Man Who was Afraid of His Shadow, (3) The Frog in the Well, (4) The River and the Ocean, and (5) a delightful story to be given in full :

### THREE IN THE MORNING

A keeper of monkeys said with regard to their ration of nuts, that each monkey was to have three in the morning and four at night. But at this the monkeys were very angry, so the keeper said that they might have four in the morning and three at night, with which arrangement they were well pleased. The actual number of nuts remained the same, but there was an adaptation to the likes and dislikes of those concerned.

I am always reminded of this story when the Minister of Food juggles with "points" values !

There are two good English translations of the Book of Chuang Tzu—one by Dr. Giles in a single volume, and the other by Dr. Legge in the two-volume Texts of Taoism is the well-known *Sacred Books of the East*.

Another Taoist Scripture, the *Kan Ying P'ien*, probably owes its survival to the fact that a collection of illustrative Moral Tales became annexed to it.

There are chapters in the Analects of Confucius that are stories, and tales are told of the Master Kung and his disciples. Once, on the top of Tae-shan, the holy mountain, with three of his disciples, Confucius mused on the evil in the world around them. Then he suggested that each of the three disciples should in turn say how he would propose to put the world right. . . . It makes a good story.

The stories of the Western Bible—both Jewish and Christian—are well known. Or at least they ought to be ! Further neglect of the Bible, however, may mean that someone will have to be commissioned to write an article on Bible Stories ! Here is a sign of the times : Ronald Knox, in *A Retreat for Priests*, finds it necessary to ask his readers if they remember the Gospel parable of the Woman who Lost a Groat ! ?

To represent Judaism in this outline I may mention *Tales from*

the *Talmud*. (There is a book, by Montague, with this title.) Also the more modern Rabbinic Anthology compiled by Montefiore and Loewe. And there is a book by Feldman that has always fascinated me: *The Parables and Similes of the Rabbis, Agricultural and Pastoral*.

Both Judaism and Christianity "flow over" into Islam. *Bible Tales in Arab Folk-lore*, by Meyouhas, makes one contact. The other is reflected in the *Koran* and in the Sufi poets.

For Moslem stories the *Koran* and the Traditional Sayings of Muhammad must both be studied. Also the Persian prophets. And it will be found that not the least interesting aspect of this study is the new light thrown on the figure of Jesus. Issa Ben Mariam is a living and very human Jesus. It is high time he was known to Christians. One story, from Nizami, is that of

### JESUS AND THE DEAD DOG

In the market-place lay a dead dog. Of the group gathered around it one said, "This carcase is disgusting"; another, "The sight of it is a torment." Every man spoke in this strain. But Jesus drew near and said, "Pearls are not equal in whiteness to his teeth."

A story from Jalal-ud-Din Rumi (*Tales of Mystic Meaning*) tells

### HOW JESUS FLED FROM THE FOOLS

Jesus, son of Mary, was fleeing to a mountain; you would say that a lion wished to shed his blood.

A certain man ran after him and said: "Is it well? There is none pursuing thee; why art thou fleeing like a bird?" . . . .

He said, "I am fleeing from the fool. Begone! I am saving myself. Do not hinder me!"

"Why," said he, "art not thou the Messiah by whom the blind and deaf are restored to sight and hearing?" . . . .

He said, "Yea." Said the other, "Then, O pure Spirit, thou doest whatsoever thou wilt; of whom has thou fear?" . . . .

Jesus said, "By the holy Essence of God, the Maker of the body and the Creator of the soul in eternity . . . .

I swear that the spells and the Most Great Name which I pronounced over the deaf and the blind were good in their effects.

I pronounced them over the stony mountain; it was cloven and tore upon itself its mantle down to the navel.

I pronounced them over the corpse; it came to life. I pronounced them over nonentity; it became entity.

I pronounced them lovingly over the heart of the fool hundreds of thousands of times, and 'twas no cure for his folly."

That story gave me one of the most satisfying sermons I ever preached. . . . I leave it to stand as my final example in this brief account of Tales for Telling. With such a fund of stories as I have indicated no preacher need fear to mount the steps of his pulpit.

## *Spiritual Drugs*

S. H. MELLONE, M.A., D.Sc.

A SIGNIFICANT sidelight on the condition of religious thought in this country is to be seen in the large circulation of the writings of Mr. C. S. Lewis and their commendation by some theologians of high standing. His latest and most ambitious work is entitled *Miracles: a Preliminary Study*.<sup>\*</sup> The meaning which the writer attaches to the word "miracle" follows from his idea of Nature—"a great interlocking system of irrational events." If so, it is scarcely necessary to argue that something which has been defined as "irrational" cannot produce things which are "rational"—the minds of men, which can have been created only by a "Cosmic Mind." This fundamental proposition of Theism the writer appears to regard as self-evident—an easy way of reaching belief in God. He simply uses the idea of Creation in order to affirm, dogmatically and without proof, the absolute transcendence of God, "the immeasurable difference not only between what He is and what other things are, but between the very mode of His existence and theirs." If this is true, it cannot also be true that "the rational and moral element in each human mind is a point of force from the Supernatural working its way into Nature," unless men are mere instruments of "the Supernatural" without any real personal co-operation with it.

The writer remarks complacently that "we may be living nearer than we suppose to the end of the Scientific Age," and that "the claim that science is true" is being "surrendered" (p. 128). After this statement (which defies reasonable comment) we are not surprised to find him describing an experimentally verified fact as "the hypothesis of a lawless sub-nature"—namely, the fact that the movements of the constituent particles of an atom are not explained on purely mechanical principles. What is really being abandoned is the notion that Nature, or the Universe, is a closed "interlocking system." There is indeed no sense in speaking of the universe *as a whole*. We live in an "expanding universe." There is no "whole"; there are immense systems, each like an "island universe" in itself, and of a number greater than any assignable limit. What is the natural inference? There is *now*, at the present time, an unending sequence of such systems, at every

\*"Miracles: a Preliminary Study," by C. S. Lewis.

(Geoffrey Bles) 10/6.

stage of physical change; and each *now* in process of being created. The conclusion that Nature is not a self-explaining system has often been fully defended, but this writer's arguments for the conclusion are philosophically weak and scientifically worthless. Even when he faces the familiar question of what is meant by a Law of Nature, he misses the essential point. Every Law of Nature is at bottom a Law *with an "if."* "Whenever and wherever a cause of the same character *recurs*, it will have an effect of the same character as before." This is all that Science can mean by an "Order of Nature," and the "whenever and wherever" logically imply the "if." Our belief in the reality of such an Order has been described as an act of scientific faith—that Nature is not "irrational" but rational. Evidently this does not exclude the possibility of an event which is "extra-ordinary" in the strictly literal meaning of the word; it only implies that in such a case we would look for an "extra-ordinary" cause. But the "extra-ordinary," until it occurs, we regard as "improbable"; we do not anticipate it as we anticipate the "ordinary."

This conclusion is definitely rejected by Mr. Lewis. He believes that miracles are not only possible but probable; and "the intrinsic probability of an alleged miracle" is to be judged by "our innate sense of the fitness of things." Apparently the sole reason for this conclusion is that some alleged miracles are on a higher level, morally and spiritually, than others; and in these cases we are to approach the evidence with a "sense of the fitness" of the alleged event. He is convinced that all the miracles recorded in the four Gospels are "historical": that is to say, the writers describe accurately what was observed or experienced by men and women during the life's work of Jesus. But the "Grand Miracle" is that "God became Man." How, then, did God "become Man?" The writer can see no other way than through a Miraculous Conception in a *Virgo intacta*. To say that this unique divine event *could* have taken place in no other way would be blasphemy; but the writer does not mean that. He relies on the story of the Virgin Birth which is related in conflicting ways by Matthew and Luke. Now this event is one which could have had no witnesses. And the remainder of the New Testament is not only silent about it, but gives plain indications of the belief being allowed to spread that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary—as though the most stupendous miracle in the history of mankind must for some reason be "hushed up." I believe there is a great heartening religious truth underlying the belief that God became Man; but to tie it up to the story of a miraculous birth is mere blind adherence to an utterly untrustworthy tradition. Mr. Lewis is a brilliant writer, with the temperament of a religious poet, but when he comes forward as a defender of traditional orthodoxy, he passes beyond his depth.



# *The Dissenting Tradition*

*A Review of Recent Historical Works.*

H. LISMER SHORT, M.A.

*THE NONCONFORMITY OF RICHARD BAXTER*,  
by IRVONWY MORGAN (Epworth Press).

*ENGLISH DISSSENT UNDER THE EARLY HANOVERIANS*, by  
DUNCAN COOMER (Epworth Press).

*THE DISSIDENCE OF DISSSENT: "The Monthly Repository,"*  
1806—1836, by FRANCIS E. MINEKA

(Univ. of N. Carolina Press).

*WELSH UNITARIANS AS SCHOOLMASTERS*, by DAVID EVANS  
(Printed at Gomerian Press, Llandyssul).

THE character and opinions of Richard Baxter have become a battleground, fought over repeatedly in later generations by men who have battles of their own and claim Baxter as a pioneer of their party. Dr. Morgan, the author of the latest biography, is concerned with Christian Reunion and naturally claims Baxter as a forerunner. But he is a Methodist, and therefore not a direct inheritor from Baxter, as Congregationalists and Unitarians are, so his exposition of Baxter's views is not coloured by his own participation in the later development of the old Dissent.

After giving a biographical account of Baxter as a Reformed pastor, a pillar of the Puritan state church, and the bishop of Nonconformity, Dr. Morgan expounds in detail Baxter's doctrine of the Church, the ministry, the Bible, the Sacraments, and "things indifferent." He shows that Baxter's standpoint in theology and churchmanship was a continuation of the Puritan tradition, as laid down by Cartwright and the Elizabethans, rather than a fore-shadowing of Liberal Nonconformity. His ideal, following Calvin, was of a Church holy, catholic, and apostolical, in which all men should come under the authority of God's Word through pastoral oversight and discipline. He was opposed to diocesan bishops, not in the name of freedom, but because they destroyed the authority of the parish minister over the people committed by God to his charge. He opposed Anglican ceremonial, partly from the usual Puritan objections to superstition, and partly because by it the High Church party was breaking up the unity of the Church. But for the sake of unity (because Christ's Church must be one, and not from general benevolence) he was willing to make some concessions, both to High Churchmen and to other schools of Dissent. In this he was an ecclesiastical statesman first, for toleration was forced upon him by historic necessity.

In truth Baxter's comprehensive Church was one in which the Puritans would have obtained all they had fought for since the Reformation, and their High Church opponents would have been decisively beaten. It is no use pretending that he offered a kindly compromise in which all parties would have been equally happy. He hoped for success, because man still had the ideal of a united Church; but his High Church

opponents also believed they had the true principle upon which unity was to be restored, and neither they nor the Puritans could accept each other's fundamentals. Disruption was inevitable, in spite of Baxter's efforts. Dr. Morgan's book demonstrates once again the historical importance of this last great Puritan leader.

Mr. Coomer's book on English Dissent describes the next stage in the journey. It does not go very deep, but it is full of picturesque detail about Nonconformist church life in the first half of the 18th century.

The Presbyterians (of whom Baxter was one, in spite of his protests about certain matters of church government) found themselves in an equivocal position. They believed in a state church and a parish ministry, and were strongly opposed to "gathered churches," mere private associations of believers without responsibility to any ecclesiastical ordering of society. At the beginning of the 18th century they were the largest and most influential section of Nonconformity. But the Toleration Act, which gave them liberty to assemble for worship, cut the link with the state and turned them into a collection of separate congregations. They tried to keep up some territorial organisation, through the district associations of ministers, which had responsibility for ordination. But the 18th century was for them a period of steady decline.

The Congregationalists or Independents, on the other hand, maintained their ground, and so did the Baptists, for the Toleration Act, which disinherited the Presbyterians, was to these others a charter of liberty. Membership among the Presbyterians was granted upon mere willingness to accept the pastoral discipline. But since the pastor had now no parochial authority, and was himself subject to lay trustees and other notables, the whole system broke down. Congregationalists and Baptists, on the other hand, granted membership only on testimony of religious experience and acceptance of a doctrinal church covenant, and in consequence their system of membership remained firm. Presbyterian laxity opened the way for doctrinal freedom and progress, but in other respects meant weakness and decline. Congregational strictness resulted in the maintenance of orthodox standards. Congregationalism benefitted by the evangelical revival, whereas Presbyterianism, becoming Unitarian, was unmoved by it, becoming instead a movement of intellectual enlightenment and social and moral reform.

Mr. Coomer, who is a Methodist of the neo-orthodox school of Bernard Lord Manning, the eminent Congregationalist, regards the theological developments of Presbyterianism in the 18th century merely as a drift from the true faith.

What the Presbyterian-Unitarian wing of Dissent had become in the early part of the 19th century can be seen in "*The Dissidence of Dissent*," by an American scholar, Francis E. Mineka. It is the story



of a leading magazine of the movement, "*The Monthly Repository*," at first as a denominational journal under the editorship of Robert Aspland, giving news of Unitarian events and people, and comments on politics, theology and literature from the denominational point of view. The emphasis was strongly upon intellectual enlightenment and political reform, and Unitarianism appeared chiefly as a religious version of Benthamite Unitarianism.

This became even more marked when W. J. Fox became editor in 1828. At the time Fox was a leading Unitarian minister, and one of the founders of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. Later, partly as the result of a domestic scandal, he and his congregation withdrew from the Unitarian body. South Place Chapel eventually developed into an ethical society. Fox became a radical orator, journalist and politician; he was M.P. for Oldham for 15 years. He continued to edit the magazine on his own responsibility, and turned it into a secular journal of politics and literature. It had several famous contributors, including Harriet Martineau, John Stuart Mill, Robert Browning, Ebenezer Elliott, and James Martineau. After nine years of success in Fox's hands, it rapidly declined under R. H. Horne and Leigh Hunt, becoming extinct in 1838.

A pamphlet of 32 pages by Rev. David Evans, now living in retirement after more than 40 years of service as minister at Cribyn and Capelygroes, tells the fine story of the Welsh Unitarian ministers as schoolmasters in the late 18th and 19th centuries, chiefly in Cardiganshire. Most of them were Alumni of the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen. Their very small ministerial salaries compelled them to take up this work, but the result was that they brought education of a high standard to the people among whom they lived.

## EXPERIMENTAL FORMS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

### A Request for Co-operation

It is intended that, in addition to articles on theological and religious issues, a place shall be found in this journal for experimental forms of public worship, either liturgical or dramatic, together with some references to unusual extra-biblical readings.

Experiments in worship have been made and repeated, so that they are coming to take a regular place in the religious life of certain congregations. Rose Queen or May Queen Services, Candlelight Services, and Marriage Commemoration Services have recently found increasing acceptance in certain quarters.

There is good reason to believe that the time has come to attempt a collation, and, maybe, the publication of these interesting innovations in the nonconformist tradition, for the benefit of ministers and congregations.

*Faith and Freedom*, with this purpose in view, seeks the co-operation of ministers, and asks that the full script of all such services, whether already published or not, shall be made available to the Editor, together with any other material likely to be of interest to the wider community which these pages will reach.

# *A Declaration of Faith*

## *Dr. Albert Schweitzer*

The following letter, translated from the original German text, has a far greater significance than the recent occasion which gave rise to it. We therefore print it in full to show the intellectual and theological affinity of its outstandingly great author with Christian liberals. Dr. Schweitzer may hence-forward be counted an adherent of those principles of enfranchised religion for which "Faith and Freedom" stands.—EDITOR.

LAMBARENE, Sunday, August 10th, 1947

**T**O THE delegates of the Conference of the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom (I.A.R.F.) in Berne.

Let me tell you how sorry I am, not to be able to be present at your Conference. For various reasons it is impossible for me to travel to Europe as yet. However, in thought I am with you in these days.

In this conference you will not forget that you are serving an unwanted object; unwanted because the spirit of to-day is opposed to free religious thinking. However, it is needed more than ever before, because for the spiritual life of our time it is a necessity. Only out of the renewal of ethical and religious thought can arise the spirit which gives to mankind the understanding and power to go from darkness and struggle into light and peace. Free Christianity has the great task of bringing to mankind once and for all the conviction that thought and religion are not irreconcilable but actually belong to each other. Every deep religion begets thinking and every truly deep thought becomes religious.

The greatest human spirits have striven for the combination of thinking and religion because they saw this as a necessity for man's spiritual well-being. We continue this effort in a time when mankind must first of all learn again to respect spiritual truth. The heart of the Christian is, for us, the Kingdom of God. Only a Christianity which is inspired by this idea and is actively willing the Kingdom of God, is near the original Christianity; only this can give mankind what it needs.

By standing for free Christianity and not asking men to become religious by giving up the thinking which is part of their very nature, we have in Jesus one, who denounces the laying on man, in the name of religion, heavy burdens which do not belong to it. We keep to the words of St. Paul: "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is unity."

May our free Christianity show itself able in spirit and in deed to fulfil its task in our time; may we all keep alive in ourselves the need to work on ourselves, that our Religion may become ever deeper and more real, so that the spirit of Jesus shall not only make us free, but deepen the reality of our Christian living. May this be our ideal.

In this thought I feel myself bound to you and I hope that this Conference may be a blessing to you.

With kindest regards, yours very sincerely,

ALBERT SCHWEITZER.